SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, is it a fact that there is a large scale theft of prawns in the Indian waters of the Bay of Bengal by foreign ships which are operating in collusion with Indian officials? If so, what action is proposed to be taken to prevent such theft which is vitally affecting our exports?

SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSHI: Sir, I have no information in this regard.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Q. No. 405...

SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH: If there is no information, how long will he take to collect the information?

SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSHI: Sir, the question of foreigners coming into this country will be looked into by the Defence Ministry. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is for the other Ministry, not his Ministry. Q. No. 405.

New forest policy

*405. DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY:†
DR. NARREDDY THULASI REDDY:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the new forest policy and how does this policy affect the forest dwellers; and

(b) whether the recommendations of the Eighth and Ninth World Forest Congress find a place in the new forest policy?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) A statement is laid on the Table of the House. (*See* below).

(b) Important features of the recommendations of the Eighth and Ninth World Forestry Congress were taken into consideration while formulating the new forest-policy.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr. G. Vijaya Mohan Reddy.

Statement

I. *Salient features of the National Forest Policy*, 1988

1. Maintenance of environmental stability through preservation and restoration of ecological balance.

2. Conservation of the natural heritage of the country by preserving the remaining natural forests and protecting the vast genetic resources for the benefit of posterity and discouraging clear felling of adequately stocked forests. Diversion of forest land for non-forest use would be permitted only after very careful examination.

3. Increasing the forest/tree cover in the country through massive afforestation and social forestry programmes, especially on all denuded, degraded and unproductive lands.

4. Increasing the productivity of forests to meet essential national needs.

5. Encouraging efficient utilisation of forest produce and involving people in protection, conservation and development of forests. For this, the rights and concessions, including grazing, should be commensurate with the carrying capacity of forests.

6. Encouraging wood substitution measures and alternate sources of energy.

II. *Important provisions of the National Forest Policy in respect of Forest Dwellers*

(i) Adequate provision of fodder, fuel and small timber.

(ii) Restricting the area under shifting cultivation.

(iii) Discouraging encroachments on forest land.

(iv) Improved and modern management practices to control forest fires.

(v) Encouragement of institutions like tribal cooperatives, labour cooperatives etc. with a view to eliminate forest contractors.

(iv) Protection, regeneration and optimum collection of minor forest produce alongwith institutional arrangement for the marketing of such produce.

(vii) Development of forest villages *on par with revenue villages.*

(viii) Family oriented schemes for improving the status of the tribal beneficiaries.

(ix) Undertaking integrated area development programmes to meet the needs of the tribal economy in and around forest areas.

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: The communities who were living in forests were living happily there and there was no scarcity of water in India. But since the cutting down of trees by contractors, industrial licensing and so many things have resulted finally in complete denudation of forests. In a State like U.P., it has been told in a survey that only 1 per cent forest cover. Such a deplorable situation we have come to. The same policy is being continued, and every year 1.5 million hectares of forests are being filled. Will the hon. Minister completely ban the felling of trees at least in hill areas and catchment areas of rivers, so that our water resources are preserved for the benefit of the nation? If not, there will be flooding and the water resources would get wasted.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: Sir, as far as, broadly, the scenario of forests is concerned, the hon. Member has rightly said that over a period of time, for many reasons there has been a lot of denudation of forests. And, Sir, it was because of this fact that the Forest Conservation Act was passed in 1980, and since then we could save some forests from being diverted for other uses. From 1951 to 1980, the diversion of forests for other uses was 1.5 lakh hectares per year which has come down to around 15,000 or 16,000 hectares per year. And it is because of this fact, Sir, that we have brought this new policy to emphasise the conservation and preservation aspect of the forests because till then the forests were taken as the main source of revenue, and the conservation aspect was of less importance. Sir, I do agree with the hon. Member that in certain areas which are econologically fragile, specially the slopy areas of the high mountains, at least for some years the felling of trees should be completely stopped. And it is one of the objectives of the New Forest Policy, and we are taking steps. We are just taking up the matter with the State Governments that in slopy forest areas and highly ecologically fragile areas, the felling of trees should be completely stopped. But, Sir, there is one aspect which has also to be taken into consideration, and that is the need of the poorer sections of our society, the need for fuel, the need for fodder which is ever-increasing because of the increase in the human population and the cattle population. And unless we provide for the basic needs of the population of our country and the cattle, it will be very, very difficult, if not impossible, to save our forest resources. And it was because of this fact that we have taken measures for plantation in a big way to meet the needs of the people as far as fuel and fodder are concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have started social forestry for this purpose. What happened to that?

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: Yes, Sir, social forestry, wasteland development and all that.

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: Sir, the 8th and the 9th Forest Congresses held in 1978 in Jakarta and in 1985 in Mexico have advocated multiple use of forestry where there is a kind of emphasis on development of agriculture in forest

areas, livestock production, shelter belts and regulation of water flow. It has also postulated that the dwellers in the forest must completely associate themselves with this multiple strategy which will protect the forests, save the tribal people and at the same time enhance the food production of the country also. And taking of figs or leaves for fodder will be adequately met with. Sir, in the 1980 Forest Act, there is complete prohibition of planting of horticulture crops and oil-bearing and medicinal plants, etc. And the Ministry expects that permission should be taken. Who will take the permission? Permission will be taken once again by the big industrialists or big people and once again the same ravaging of the forests will take place in the name of plantation, in the name of this and that. That is why, will the hon. Minister revise the entire policy so that the tribals are protected and the Government takes on itself this multiple use strategy so that the forest wealth is protected, the water resources are protected and the food of the country is also augmented?

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: Sir, as far as the New Forest Policy is concerned, we have taken into account the needs of the tribals who are living in the forests and around the forest area...

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: No, no.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: Vajpayeeji, you may disagree. And let up agree to disagree. But whatever is with me, our forest policy and the emphasis which we have placed is that we have taken steps...

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: All outside the boundaries of the forests...

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: No, Sir. As far as plantations and horticultural activities in forest areas are concerned, we are against diversion of forest land for horticultural activities. We want to maintain forests. The objective of our forest policy is that one-third of the total land mass of the country should be under forest cover which, unfortunately, is not the position today, and if we will just divert forest areas for horticulture purposes or for plantations and commercial crops, then I am sure, mostly it will be the big people....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, he agrees with you.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI:...who will benefit by that, and not the tribals.

DR. NARREDDY THULASI REDDY: Sir, after the introduction of the new forest policy, the forest dwellers have become pauper. Consequent on this, the tribal areas in hill regions have become strongholds and hideouts of terrorists and the Naxalites, as they have won the sympathies of oppressed forest dwellers. I would like to know whether the Government is aware of this fact and if it is so, whether there is a rethinking on it to revise the forest policy.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: Sir, as far as the new forest policy is concerned, our stress is that we should involve the persons especially belonging to the weaker sections of the society, the tribals, the Scheduled Castes and others and the dwellers in forest areas, and involve them in the process of conserving forests. about the problem of Naxalite activities etc., this is a law and order problem which should be taken care of by the law and order machinery. This unfortunate phenomenon is everywhere and certain clever sections of the society exploit the poorer and ignorant sections of our population, and this is the irony of fate of this country.

SHRI ANAND SHARMA: The hon. Minister has himself said that the forest cover of the Himalayas is depleting fast, and leave aside one-third of the land covred by forests, I think we have barely 11 per cent today. Though on paper, it may be 19 to 20 per cent, but the satellite pictures taken by various countries, including the statements made by forest experts of Chia pint out that it is barely 11 to 12 per cent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Come to India.

SHRI ANAND SHARMA: I am talking of India, of the Himalayas. In the hills, there are two reasons for felling the trees. One is for fruit packaging in the major hill States, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal, and every year one hundred thousand fully grown trees are felled. How are you going to save that situation? Secondly, about fuel consumption, to develop an alternative fuel for the hill people is the only way to save forests.

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: The hon. Member has put a very correct question. Packaging is one of the causes for denudation of forests. We have taken steps, specially with the Himalayan States, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir and other States. They are making use of alternative fuel.

SHRI ANAND SHARMA: Will the Government of India give more subsidy?

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI: We are giving subsidy and they are converting....

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Declaration of assets by legislators and their family members

*401. SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to enact legislation enjoining upon all legislators and their family members to declare their assets; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE AND THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Agreement with the United States to combat drug trafficking

*406. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: SHRI KAPIL VERMA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to sign an agreement with the United States for jointly combating the trafficking in narcotics; if so, what will be the main features of the agreement and by when it will be signed;

(b) how far Government have cut the legal production of opium on account of alleged threat of leakage; and

(c) how far Government have stepped up international cooperation to combat drug trafficking and in what manner Government are combating transit of narcotics through India to the West European countries and to the United States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) A Draft Agreement on bilateral cooperation covering all aspects of drug problem has been exchanged between Government of USA and the Government of India. As soon as the agreement is finalised, it will be signed.

(b) In India, opium poppy cultivation for the production of opium is mainly export-oriented. In recent years, Indian opium has been facing stiff competition from alternate raw materials which has affected the exports, leading to accumulation of huge stocks of opium in the Government factories. In the circumstances, Government have been constrained to reduce the acreage under cultivation which has been brought down from about 66,000 hectares in 1977-78 to about 15,000 hectares in 1988-89. However, such reduction is not on account of alleged threat of leakage from licit production.